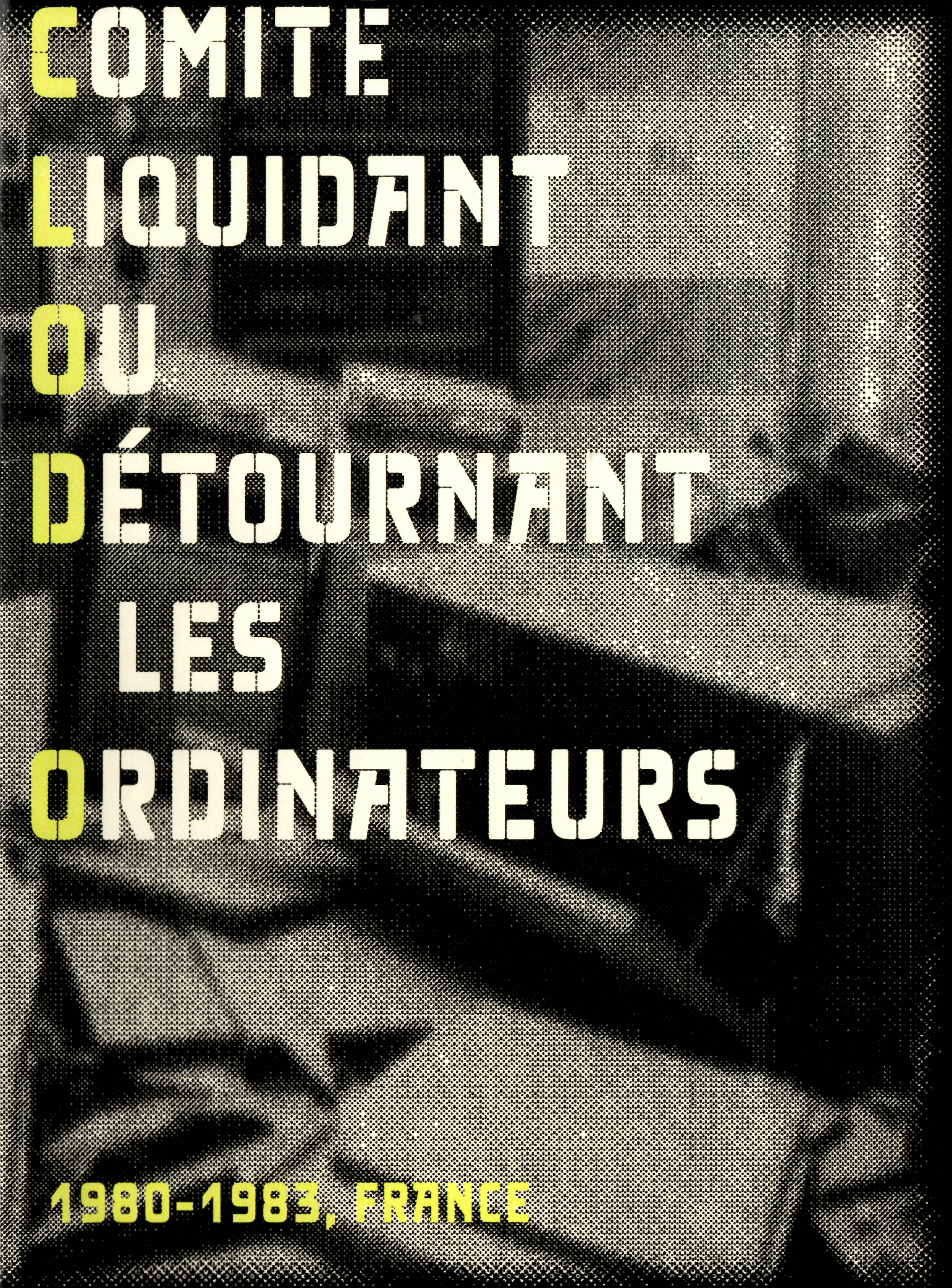

COMITÉ LIQUIDANT OU DÉTOURNANT LES ORDINATEURS

1980-1983, FRANCE

COMMUNIQUÉS FROM THE WAR ON COMPUTERS

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- April 8, 1980: arson at CII-Honeywell-Bull and Philips in Toulouse
- May 19, 1980: arson of the archives of International Computers Limited in Toulouse
- August 9, 1980: 5 kg bomb discovered and defused at CII-Honeywell-Bull in Louveciennes
- September 11, 1980: arson at computer company in Toulouse
- December 2, 1980: arson of the offices of the Union des Assurances de Paris
- January 28 1983: bombing of a computer center in Haute-Garonne
- October 26, 1983: bombing of office of the American company, Sperry Univac
- December 26, 1983: bombing of American company National Cash in Toulouse

(This first text is excerpted from the article *Does Not Compute*, by Austin Train, first published in *Green Anarchy* #12, then in the Green Anarchy anthology, *Uncivilized*.)

A LONG BATTLE OF DISSIDENT GROUPS AGAINST COMPUTER CENTERS WAS occurring in France in the 1970s and early 1980s. On August 14, 1979, at the Bank de Rothschild in Paris, windows of the keypunching room were blown out and data processing facilities were attacked with molotov cocktails, causing major damage in the data preparation area. In Toulouse, France, on May 20, 1980, an organized left-wing group calling themselves the Committee on the Liquidation of Computers (CLODO) claimed responsibility for the destruction of computer systems and data during an attack on Phillips Data Systems.

Phillips specializes in the sale of computers and the storage of bookkeeping data belonging to private companies. The CLODO activists claimed to have carried out this action because the equipment and data were being used by the armed forces and the French counter-espionage organization. Members of the CLODO gathered the computer programs and magnetic data cards and burnt them in the toilets of the offices; they also damaged the computers and removed all the personnel files for the firm. In a statement by CLODO to the Left-wing newspaper *Liberation*, they said:

> We are computer workers and therefore well placed to know the present and future dangers of computer

> systems. Computers are the favorite tool of the powerful. They are used to classify, to exploit, to put on file, to control, and to repress.

As if to help the CLODO activists make their point, the pro-government French daily newspaper *Le Figaro*, in their coverage of the action, pointed out,

> The destruction of a computer could cause far more damage than the murder of a politician. A modern nation is infinitely vulnerable. It is much more effective for those who aim to harm or even paralyze it to put computers out of action than to shoot up ministries or murder policemen.

Within four days of the attack on Phillips, the computer center for the CII-Honeywell-Bull company in Toulouse was set on fire. CLODO later claimed responsibility in a phone call to the French Press Agency. The caller told the press that a systematic plan to paralyze the operations of computer firms located in France was in full effect. Their group was out to destroy computer systems on the grounds that they were weapons in the hands of the government. CLODO had approached both Phillips and CII-Honeywell earlier when it had placed bombs at their computer centers. There was no damage but CLODO made its involvement public by scrawling slogans on the grounds proclaiming "out with computers."

In June 1980, CLODO rebels in Toulouse ransacked a hall which had been prepared for an international symposium on computers. The raiders left the message: "Scientist swine. No to capitalist data processing!" Around the same time, another band of French revolutionaries, picking up CLODO's computer cudgel, fired a bazooka rocket at the buildings that housed the French Ministry of Transportation in Paris. The armed anarchist formation Action Directe, who claimed credit for the attack, wanted to protest the agency's planned computer projects. The blast was intended to dramatize Action Directe's belief that computers condemn people to the "ghettos of program and organizational patterns."

CLODO themselves switched their attention back to Toulouse on September 12 when (according to the French magazine *Computer Weekly*) three fires gutted a computer and electronics goods shop. In March 1981, CLODO rebels struck again, this time destroying an IBM computer at the local headquarters of the Banque Populaire in Toulouse. Finally, in May 1981, another computer center in Toulouse was seriously damaged in a plastic explosives attack. "British power kills in Ireland" was spraypainted on the walls of the building. Despite the IRA slogan, police believe CLODO was responsible…

CLODO COMMUNIQUÉ 1

[Translator note: The communiqué appeared in *Libération* on 9 April 1980 under the headline "Le Clodo revendique l'attentat de Toulouse". In the preceding five days, CLODO had set the files and computers of Philips Data Systems and CII-Honeywell-Bull on fire.]

AUTHENTIFICATION

Ask Albert Louys, the director of Philips Data Systems in Toulouse, to explain himself:
—the presence of a cartridge belt (and a Rolls Royce catalogue!) in the left hand drawers.
—the nature of the folder "affaire Rodeau" (or *affaire Rodeau-Borel*) with its orange cover.

WHY THIS COMMUNIQUE?

We don't see the point of press releases when actions speak for themselves. Unfortunately, some have carelessly claimed an attack of which they are not the authors.

We support the organization Action Directe, like we do all those who practice direct action against authority, but the communiqué previously sent to AFP is fake. We did not take any files, so there will not be any publications or "revelations."

WHY THIS SABOTAGE?

As you will have suspected, we are IT workers, and are therefore well placed to understand the current and future dangers of IT and telematics. The computer is the preferred tool of the dominant. It is used to exploit, to file, to control, to repress Tomorrow, telematics will establish "1984"; the day after: the programmed man, the man-machine...

This is what we are attacking, and will continue to attack. Our sabotage is only a more spectacular version of those attacks performed daily by us or by others.

WHO ARE WE?

We're asking this question not to make it easier for the cops, but to clarify the obvious:

—We are neither the armed wing of the proletariat, nor pure and strong militants, even less the center of an organization with a desire for hegemonic power.

—We are neither Cubans, nor Libyans, nor Martians.

—Almost above suspicion, we attend neither general assemblies nor any meetings. We are not looking to recruit. We know we are not alone.

—In an increasingly unlivable society, we are a group of rebels like there are hundreds of them.

—We don't want to be locked in the ghetto of programs and organizational platforms. Fighting against all dominations is our only goal.

—Comité Liquidant Ou Détournant Les Ordinateurs. (CLODO)

CLODO COMMUNIQUÉ 2

[Translator note: The communiqué appeared in *01 Hebdo* (issue 735) on February 7, 1983 under the headline "Le Clodo adresse une lettre à 01". It was received ten days earlier on the day of CLODO's bombing of the data-processing centre of Colomiers, a municipality just outside of Toulouse.]

THE BRAIN DRAIN CONTINUES! LAST NIGHT, AT MORE THAN 6,000 METERS/second, a fraction of the state's memories dissipated into air at Colomiers.

Catalogues of offenses, alerts and objects; catalogues of stolen vehicles; catalogues of vehicle registration cards; catalogues of migrant workers; the embryo of an anti-terrorist catalogue...The prefecture of Haute-Garonne experienced memory loss when its computer center was shaken.

Of course they will say that they have duplicates in Paris (the pleasures of centralization!), that there could have been human victims, and that it is a cowardly attack (the more one risks one's life and one's freedom, the more one is a coward...of course!). However, we know that for several weeks the prefecture of Haute-Garonne will be paralyzed. We also know that by using explosives for the first time (dismantling the locks and alarm system was beyond our competence) we will be treated as followers of Khadafi or Carlos, even if our arrangement of the explosives, and their discharging, left no room for accidents. Let's say it, once and for all, the end justified the means, and the risks were only for us.

The centralized computer system of policing that we were aiming at—that of files and secrecy—perfectly symbolizes what we are fighting against day after day. We do so because the spectacle is not our destiny.

Many bosses have learned, and will learn, that their "negligence" and "bugs" are more costly than our tires and explosions.

Our society of "IF...GO TO"-squared, codified, aligned, controlled—this society where we connect like trains in a rail yard, desperately hoping to reduce chance and cancel the revolt, where those in power consider themselves the indispensable designer or analyst, where the binary and the quantitative are supposed to solve the crisis, this society in which we live is unbearable and inhuman.

In an appendix to the Nora-Mine report, Philippe Le-Moine wrote that he saw the computer as a tool for change. Indeed, the computer is only a tool, a pile of junk, which we take as neither a devil nor as a god. But it is a tool in the hands of the dominant and, as a result, it only reinforces hierarchies and inequalities. If computers could allow people to work two hours a day, they would produce unemployment for some and stupefaction for others...and the socialists turn them into the symbol of change! What could be more laughable and more distressing than the ecstatic bliss of a [former French president, François] Mitterand or of a [French politician/author Jean-Jacques] Servan-Schreiber faced with the magical computer potion that will be the change of society!

The reality in which we are living is the multiplication of files; alienation of programmers, desk clerks and operators (who are often unaware of what they are doing and, *a fortiori*, of the results of their work); the search for profit and perfection of rationalization. Behind the smokescreen of an expanding microcomputer industry—with large and medium-sized systems which cost more than one million francs selling like hotcakes—IBM France, which prides itself on having become the fifth largest French exporter, is continuing its monopolistic hold.

The progress of technology is not the same as the progress of humanity. That some people see in the personal computer the "man of the year" or the instrument of a rediscovered conviviality makes us smile. That others want to teach basic computer skills to 50 million French people in two years (following the example of the Cuban literacy campaigns) is even more of a joke. But when all this seems to justify the real computerization, the one that enables our flawed society, that causes the filing and the unemployment, the reinforcement of power and centralization, then our laughter turns into a grimace, and fighting becomes necessary.

The leftist parties are as stupid and dangerous as the parties on the right, even if naivety and ignorance sometimes replace the thirst for profit. One need to only look at their miserable municipal campaigns... We refuse to choose between the plague and cholera when the life or non-life of billions of people is at stake. By attacking this fragmentary, but oh so symbolic and significant, sector that is telematics, we join the struggle of billions of oppressed people, and we *know* it.

Our dreams of change have led us to sabotage—spectacular or not—but destruction carries its own opposite; don't you think, dialecticians!

CLODO

CLODO SPEAKS

(Self interview published in *Terminal 19/84* #16, October 1983, English translation published in *Processed World* 10, February 1984)

SPORADIC ACTS OF SABOTAGE AGAINST COMPANIES INVOLVED IN NUCLEAR plant construction began to take place in the region of Toulouse, France in mid-1979. This occurred at the height of vigorous, broad-based regional opposition to the construction of the GOLFECH nuclear power plant on the Garonne River. But the local anti-nuke movement reached an impasse in early 1981, when it became clear that GOLFECH would continue unabated. Despite, or because of this impasse, sabotage became more frequent and the targets more diverse.

In June 1983, a stolen bust of Jean Jaures, famous socialist of the 1900s, appeared hanging by the neck from a tree in front of city hall. A "suicide note," signed by Jaures and "edited" by the "Association of Mischief Makers," denounced the current socialist government [of Francois Mitterand] for repressive, authoritarian policies. According to the note, Jaures regretted a life wasted on the futile path of advancing the social-democratic cause, which had come to such an ignominious end.

In the following months, several attacks on Catholic bookstores and religious statues (including the bust of Pontius Pilate near the famous religious shrine at Lourdes), signed by a "Stop the Priests" campaign, protested the visit of the Pope and the "Vatican Multinational Corporation." That same summer a number of companies and governmental offices that were directly or indirectly involved in the GOLFECH construction suffered serious damage by explosion or fire.

While different groups, often with humorous names ("A Heretofore Unknown Group") and punning acronyms, have claimed responsibility for these actions, the tone and content of their communiques reflect a common perspective. The "Committee for the Liquidation and Subversion of Computers," known by its French acronym CLODO (an untranslatable slang term which means something like "bum") has claimed responsibility for six actions over the past three years, most of them involving torching or otherwise destroying computer centers. The most recent action occurred in October 1983 when the offices of SPERRY—a US-owned computer manufacturer—went up in flames. Nearby, graffiti read "Reagan attacks Grenada, SPERRY multinational is an accomplice."

Though CLODO's emphasis on computer technology reflects a specific area of expertise and interest, they are ideologically close to the other saboteurs of the region: they claim to work as an ad hoc grouping, associating around particular actions and interests, and eschew the notion of themselves as a formal organization. They have no rigid rules and principles and tolerate considerable diversity among individual participants; they distinguish themselves from traditional left groups by their rejection of a "vanguard" role, their explicitly anti-authoritarian playfulness and a sense of humor that they wield as an ideological weapon.

One French newspaper described the saboteurs as part of an "anarcho-libertarian" movement that is based in Toulouse. In another "interview" with a group that conducted simultaneous "fireworks" at two sites of nuclear-related production in August 1983, "Groucho" explains:

> "People talk a lot about the silent majority and it gets a lot of press. But there is also a muzzled minority that can only express itself through political and social rejection, because it rejects the sham of democracy. It doesn't

> demand the right to free speech, the right to justice, the rights of man—it takes these rights, or at least it tries to. This minority exists, be it organized or disorganized, atomized in the social fabric, revolutionary or deviant. In our practice, we affirm its specific character. We have no illusions about the propaganda of ideas, but we support everyone who can no longer stand injustices and contributes their little recipes to subvert a capitalized daily life.

French authorities denounce the saboteurs as deranged and inhuman, always pretending that it's only by chance that no one gets injured. In fact, the obvious caution demonstrated by this particular brand of sabotage (there have been no human casualties in the acts described here) is clearly distinct from the bombs in trains and other public places worldwide that continue to claim innocent lives in the name of this or that "liberation organization."

The following "interview" was sent to the French magazine, *Terminal 19/84* and appeared in the October 1983 issue.

WHY DID YOU ACCEPT THIS INTERVIEW?

We've always felt that acts speak for themselves, and we decided to write a communique only because a (presumed?) member of a so-called armed, and in any case ephemeral, organization tried to pass off our acts as something they aren't. In the face of the propaganda of Power, which is particularly stupefying when it is about computers, and to end some myths about us, we felt some explanations have become necessary.

WHY DO YOU DO COMPUTER SABOTAGE?

To challenge everyone, programmers and non-programmers, so that we can reflect a little more on this world we live in and which we create, and on the way computerization transforms this society.

The truth about computerization should be revealed from time to time. It should be said that a computer is just a bunch of metal that severs only to do what one wants it to do, that in our world it's just one more tool, a particularly powerful one, that's at the service of the dominators.

We are essentially attacking what these tools lead to: files, surveillance by means of badges and cards, instrument of profit maximization for the bosses and of accelerated pauperization for those who are rejected...

The dominant ideology has clearly understood that, as a simple tool, the computer didn't serve its interests very well. So the computer became a parahuman entity (cf. the discussion on artificial intelligence), a demon or an angel—but capable of domestification (computer games and telecommunications were supposed to persuade us of this)—anything but a zealous servant of the system we live in. In this way, they hope to transform the values of the system into a system of values.

By our actions we have wanted to underline the material nature of the computer—tools on the one hand, and on the other, the destiny of domination which has been conferred on it. Finally, though what we do is primarily propaganda through action, we also know that the damage we cause leads to setbacks and substantial delays.

DOESN'T THE SPECTACULAR, RADICAL ASPECT OF THE DESTRUCTION YOU CAUSE SEEM A BIT OUTRAGEOUS?

These actions are only the visible tip of the iceberg! We ourselves and others fight daily in a less ostensible way. With computers, like with the army, police, or politics, in fact, like with all privileged instruments of power, errors are the rule, and working them out takes up the majority of programmers' time! We take advantage of this, which undoubtedly costs our employers more than the material damage we cause. We'll only say that the art consists of creating bugs that will only appear later on, little time-bombs.

To get back to your question—what could be more ordinary than throwing a match on a package of magnetic tapes? Anybody can do it! The act appears excessive only for those who don't know, or who don't want to know, what most computer systems are used for.

THEN HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN THE FACT THAT OTHERS HAVEN'T DONE SIMILAR THINGS?

To tell the truth, it's hard to explain. We are in a good position to know that most computer workers really participate with their "work tools" and rarely use their gray matter to reflect on what they do (they generally would rather not know about it!). As for those who don't work with computers, they are unconcerned or they passively accept the dominant propaganda. But that doesn't explain everything, and even those who do resist the soporifics of power are still scared of police uniforms!

AREN'T YOU REALLY A BIT RETRO, LIKE THE MACHINE BREAKERS OF THE 19TH CENTURY?

Faced with the tools of those in power, dominated people have always used sabotage or subversion. It's neither retrograde nor novel. Looking at the past, we see only slavery and dehumanization, unless we go back to certain so-called primitive societies. And though we may not all share the same "social project," we know that it's stupid to try and turn back the clock.

Computer tools are undoubtedly perverted at their very origin (the abuse of the quantitative and the reduction to the binary are proof of this) but they could be used for other ends than the ones they now serve. When we recognize that the most computerized sector is the army, and that 94% of civilian computer-time is used for management and accounting, we don't feel like the loom-breakers of the 19th century (even though they fought against dehumanization in their jobs). Nor are we defenders of the computer-created unemployed...if microprocessors create unemployment, instead of reducing everyone's working-time, it's because we live in a brutal society, and this is by no means a reason to destroy microprocessors.

HOW DO YOU SITUATE YOUR ACTIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF FRANCE AND THE REST OF THE WORLD?

Computerization is world-wide. In the Third World, it helps to reinforce the ideological and economic domination of the West, especially the US, and to a lesser extent, of local power. We therefore consider that our struggle is global, even if that sounds exaggerated given the pin pricks we actually accomplish.

WHAT ARE YOUR PROJECTS FOR THE FUTURE?

Little by little the theory of computerization that we have been developing for several years is getting fleshed out. On the whole, though, it remains unchanged since computers are still basically being used by the same people for the same things. So there is no reason not to continue in the same direction. With more imagination, and at our own pace, even if the result is less spectacular than our previous actions. The rapid pace of automation and the forthcoming explosion of telecommunications opens a wider field of action and revolt. We will try to fight in these areas, knowing that our efforts are partial. There's room for all rebels!

WHAT ARE YOUR CHANCES OF SUCCESS? AREN'T YOU AFRAID OF GETTING CAUGHT?

Our chances are fine, thank you. We've got the motives and the ideas, and among the blind, the one-eyed are kings. For more than three years a security court of the State (may it rest in peace) and several dozen mercenaries have been looking for us: their material resources are sophisticated but pretty insufficient and our last action against the information center of the Haute-Garonne municipality must have shown them we know more about them than they know about us! We are nonetheless conscious of the risks we run and the scope of the arsenal we are running up against. May our next interview not be with a police magistrate!

—Toulouse, August 1983
translated and introduced by Maxine Holz